



# NEWS RELEASE

## HOWARD COUNTY DEPARTMENT OF POLICE OFFICE OF PUBLIC AFFAIRS

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### **School Employee Charged with Embezzlement** *Former Secretary Arrested for Stealing \$10,000*

Howard County police arrested a former school secretary yesterday for stealing nearly \$10,000 from school funds. Ethel Collette Kirk, 51, of 8312 Mary Lee Lane in Laurel, was charged with theft, embezzlement, counterfeiting and fraud.

School officials contacted police in July to report bookkeeping irregularities at Folly Quarter Middle School in Ellicott City. Officials reported that Kirk, who had quit her job in June, was unable to reconcile her financial records. Police launched an investigation and found several thousand dollars missing.

Investigators learned that Kirk was writing checks from a school fund to "Cash" and forging the principal's signature. Kirk then endorsed the checks and cashed them. Her records falsely indicated that the checks had been written to vendors or, in some cases, fictional companies. The forged checks dated back to May of 2003.

Kirk was arrested at her home yesterday and charged with:

- eight counts of theft over \$500;
- 19 counts of theft under \$500;
- 19 counts of embezzlement;
- 17 counts of counterfeiting;
- 19 counts of uttering false documents;
- 16 counts of making false entries into public records;
- one count of committing a theft scheme over \$500; and
- one count of committing a theft scheme under \$500.

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